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Title : Need to repeal the Protected Area and Restricted Area Permit which restricts the entry of foreigners in North Eastern States.

DR. THOKCHOM MEINYA (INNER MANIPUR): Sir, tourism can be developed to its fullest potential in the North-Eastern States of the country. The huge potential of tourism industry in the region need not be re-emphasised. These States do not have enough resource/revenue collection for their developmental infrastructure or otherwise. At the moment, we are assisted by the Union Government for everything. But we cannot continue requesting the Union Government for plan assistance for years to come. The Union Government should also try to explore the type of industries that will be suited in the region and develop them fully. Tourism industry is one such industry through which these States shall be able to earn a good amount of revenue to supplement any deficiency and meet their other demands.

However, in this era of liberalisation and globalisation and in this biggest democracy of the world, we still continue with a law in my State, Manipur in the form of Protected Area Permit or Restricted Area Permit which restricts the entry of foreigners in the State. Under this law, foreigners are not permitted to enter the State without a special permit issued by the Union Home Ministry, that too, for a very short duration. Such restrictions are not imposed in any part of the country. Therefore, such a law is discriminatory and undemocratic and it amounts to unequal treatment amongst the States of the Union.

Even after 60 years of Independence, the North-Eastern States are still treated in a very strange manner. For this, we are not blaming anybody or, for that matter, any Government. But now it is high time for the Union Government to look into such small but sensitive issues. As a matter of fact, such restrictions and unequal treatment not only tend to alienate the people of the North-East but also seriously hinder the development of tourism in the region since foreign tourists are being discouraged to enter the region by such an infamous law.

Therefore, I very respectfully urge upon the Union Government, particularly the Ministry of Home Affairs, to stop this meaningless and discriminatory Restricted Area Permit System immediately.